

Commencement notice for Merchant Shipping (Control of Ballast Water and Sediments) Regulation gazetted

The Merchant Shipping (Control of Ballast Water and Sediments) Regulation (Commencement) Notice was gazetted today (June 12).

The Secretary for Transport and Housing has appointed August 13, 2020, as the day on which the Merchant Shipping (Control of Ballast Water and Sediments) Regulation (Cap 413Q) comes into operation. This is to tie in with the date when the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) will be applied to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). The Regulation was enacted by the Legislative Council earlier on.

After the commencement of the Regulation, the standards and procedures of the HKSAR for the management and control of ships' discharge of ballast water and sediments will be in line with the relevant international requirements established by the IMO.

The commencement notice will be tabled to the Legislative Council on June 17 for negative vetting.

Appointment of Research Grants Council Chairman

The Government announced today (June 12) that the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, has appointed Professor Joseph Lee Hun-wei as Chairman of the Research Grants Council (RGC) for a term of three years with effect from July 1, 2020.

Professor Lee is an expert in environmental hydraulics, water quality modelling and environmental management. He is currently a member of the RGC, as well as the Senior Advisor to the President of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and Chair Professor of the Guangzhou HKUST Fok Ying Tung Research Institute. He was a member of the Engineering Panel under the RGC between 1993 and 1998.

"Professor Lee is a distinguished scholar, seasoned educator and university administrator. With his ample experience in higher education and research, I am confident that he will continue to advance the vibrant research culture in academia and lead the RGC in rendering enhanced support

to the research community in the years to come," Mr Yeung said.

Mr Yeung also paid tribute to Professor Benjamin W Wah, the outgoing Chairman of the RGC, for his valuable contributions during his chairmanship of over seven years. "Under Professor Wah's sterling leadership, the RGC has continued to excel and firmly established itself as a respected and major academic research funding body in Hong Kong that stands international comparison and contributes to building a solid foundation for research in Hong Kong," he said.

"Professor Wah has provided invaluable counsel on research-related matters. He has spearheaded new research funding schemes to meet the diversified needs of different scholars in the research arena. During his tenure, there has been increasing collaboration between the RGC and other research bodies from both the Mainland and overseas."

The RGC advises the Government, through the University Grants Committee, on the needs of Hong Kong's higher education institutions in the field of academic research and on the distribution of funding for academic research projects undertaken by academic staff of higher education institutions. The RGC manages a variety of research funding programmes, including the General Research Fund, the Early Career Scheme, the Collaborative Research Fund, the Research Impact Fund, the Theme-based Research Scheme, the Areas of Excellence Scheme and various Joint Research Schemes. It has set up committees and subject panels to assess research bids in various disciplines, such as biology and medicine, business studies, engineering, humanities and social sciences, and physical sciences. It also manages a number of fellowship schemes, including the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme and the RGC Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme.

Import and export of mercury to be controlled under Import and Export (General) Regulations

The Import and Export (General) Regulations (Amendment of Schedules 1 and 2) Order 2020 (Amendment Order) to control the import and export of mercury was gazetted today (June 12).

The Amendment Order seeks to subject mercury trading to the import and export control under the Import and Export (General) Regulations (Cap. 60 sub. leg. A). Under the Amendment Order, elemental mercury as a scheduled article specified in Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 to the Regulations will be subject to the respective import and export licensing control to be administered by the Director of Environmental Protection (DEP) under the delegated authority of the Director-General of Trade and Industry.

"The Amendment Order will enable Hong Kong to effectively fulfil the obligations under the Minamata Convention on Mercury to restrict the import and export of mercury," a spokesman for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) said.

The Convention, which came into force in August 2017, is an international legally binding treaty to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds. The People's Republic of China is one of the Parties to the Convention, which also applies to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. One of the obligations under the Convention is to control the import and export of mercury by establishing a prior written consent mechanism to regulate mercury trading. Before issuing a licence, the DEP will consider whether the use of the mercury will be allowed under the Convention, whether the mercury will be stored in an environmentally sound manner, whether the source of the mercury is allowed under the Convention in the case of an import licence, and whether the import of the mercury is agreeable to the importing side in the case of an export licence. These factors for consideration will be stated in the application guidelines to be issued by the EPD.

The Amendment Order will be tabled in the Legislative Council for negative vetting on June 17, and will take effect on November 1, 2020.

[Updates to regulations for merchant ships on prevention of pollution proposed](#)

The Government proposes to amend the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Oil Pollution) Regulation, the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Pollution by Garbage) Regulation and the Merchant Shipping (Prevention of Air Pollution) Regulation to incorporate the latest requirements of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships of the International Maritime Organization into local legislation.

A spokesman for the Transport and Housing Bureau today (June 12) said, "The proposed amendments involve allowing the use of electronic record books on board ships as an alternative to traditional hard copy record books, and the scope of application of Energy Efficiency Design Index requirements to ships having ice-breaking capabilities." The amendments are in line with the trend of transacting shipping business by electronic means, and will contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development.

The Legislative Council Panel on Economic Development and the Hong Kong Fleet Operation Advisory Committee of the Marine Department have been

consulted on the legislative proposal. Members supported the proposal.

The proposed legislative amendments were gazetted today and will be tabled at the Legislative Council on June 17 for negative vetting.

Labour Department to hold occupational health public talks

The Labour Department (LD) will hold a public talk entitled "Health hazards of hot environment at work" on June 18 (Thursday). The talk, designed for workers in hot environments to enhance their awareness of heat stroke prevention, will cover symptoms of heat stroke, its first aid treatment and preventive measures.

The talk will be given by the LD's occupational health nurse and occupational hygienist at 3pm in the Lecture Hall of the Hong Kong Space Museum, 10 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui.

The LD will hold another talk entitled "Occupational safety and health (OSH) for confined space workers" on June 22 (Monday). To enhance workers' OSH awareness in regard to confined spaces, the talk will explain the related OSH hazards as well as their preventive measures.

The talk will be given by the LD's occupational hygienist, occupational safety officer and occupational health nurse at 3pm in Activity Room 1, G/F, Hong Kong Central Library, 66 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay.

Both talks will be conducted in Cantonese. Admission is free. Infection control measures taking into account the latest epidemic developments will be adopted at both venues. For enquiries or registration, please call 2852 4040.